



Strategic Volunteering

10 Selfish Reasons to Volunteer

1. Fill the gap in your resume. Call it pro bono work.
2. Make contacts to get a paid position.
3. Learn new skills including improving your local language ability.
4. Learn about an occupation or industry that interests you.
5. Maintain current skills.
6. Make your own schedule, including how many hours you want to work.
7. Build your confidence.
8. Enhance your leadership skills.
9. Get a sense of accomplishment. (I did something worthwhile today.)
10. Get recognition for a job well done.

Questions to ask

- Do you want volunteering to be an extension of your paying job or a departure from it?
- Which skills do you want to use? Does this position use these skills?
- What skills do you want to learn? Does this position allow this?
- Determine how many hours you want to work and for what duration. Does level of commitment mesh with the volunteer organization's needs?
- Can I legally volunteer for this type of position? Host country laws on volunteering/pro bono work/interning differ. Some may not allow you to help at a for-profit firm.
- If you are working for a non-profit, do you embrace the organization's cause?
- If you want to meet key contacts in this industry does this position allow this?
- When you visit the organization, do you get a good vibe? Do the volunteers and paid workers look pleasantly busy and seem fulfilled with their work?
- If you want to meet like-minded individuals, can you find them at the organization? Which sort of population do you want to help? Children? The elderly? Teenagers?

Other Suggestions

- While it is not a requirement, it is always prudent to inform the chief of mission of ANY activity engaged in on the local economy, including volunteering. Family members should be encouraged to take that step BEFORE engaging in the activity.
- Be professional (show up on time, properly dressed and work hard) if you want to be able to generate networking contacts, references or a potential job offer.
- If you can't find a volunteer activity or position that interests you, create your own.
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- Don't forget to put it on your résumé and remember the federal government takes volunteer work into consideration when qualifying candidates for positions.

Overseas Resources

The J. Kirby Simon Foreign Service Trust provides grants for community service projects where American and locally engaged employees and family members are volunteering overseas. The grants support projects that are usually conducted in cooperation with local charitable or educational organizations. For additional information about the Trust and complete submission guidelines, visit www.kirbysimonstrust.org

The AAFSW/Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad (SOSA) recognizes volunteer efforts at posts overseas. All active American USG direct-hire employees, their spouses and family members over the age of 18, their EFM domestic partners and their members of household (MOH) are eligible. A recipient is chosen from each regional bureau for their volunteer achievement. Winners will receive a cash award of \$2500, a certificate signed by the Secretary of State, and travel to Washington for the awards ceremony. For additional information visit <http://www.aafsw.org/?s=sosa>

DC Volunteer Resources

<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/79986.htm> List of volunteer resources in the DC area

<http://www.idealists.org/> Volunteer opportunities in the DC area

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/> Volunteer opportunities in major cities in the U.S.

Volunteer Online

Language issues? Want the ultimate flexible schedule? Consider volunteering online for an organization or cause that interests you. Here are a few sites to get you started:

<http://www.onlinevolunteering.org/en/vol/index.html> This UN Online Volunteering website will match your skills to projects around the world.

<http://www.sparked.com/> - This is another website that allows you to complete tasks on-line for non-profit organizations.

<http://www.grassroots.org/volunteerland> This site matches people with website and graphic design skills to U.S. non profits.

<http://translatorswithoutborders.org/> Use your translations skills to help out NGOs.

Keep the following in mind when pursuing online volunteer work:

- Get as much information as you can about the scope of the project, deadlines and other details.
- Be prepared to supply your own software if of a computer programming nature.
- Report to your contact regularly. Develop a relationship rather than simply submit a finished product.
- Don't be afraid to share your ideas and take the initiative with the client. When you produce quality ideas, people realize that you exist somewhere.

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